



News Release

For Immediate Release:
Wednesday, November 10, 2004
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UCAN Campaign Gets Utahns to Cover Up and Use Sunscreen

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Cancer Action Network’s (UCAN) skin cancer campaign is not only increasing awareness about skin cancer but is also getting more people to cover up and to use sunscreen. The UCAN campaign and its successes are featured in the October issue of *Preventing Chronic Disease*, an online journal of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“We are thrilled that the UCAN skin cancer campaign is having an impact in our community,” said Janet Heins, Coordinator, Utah Cancer Control Program, Utah Department of Health (UDOH). “Protecting your skin is important because Utahns are more prone to skin cancer, due to the state’s high altitude, large number of sunny days and access to outdoor recreation year round.”

Because of this high risk of cancer, in February 2003, UCAN worked with Crowell Advertising, Marketing & PR, to develop Utah's first skin cancer awareness campaign. The messages inform parents about proper sun care to prevent skin cancer. “Our goal is to reduce the skin cancer in Utah. We can do that by getting more people to use sunscreen and to cover up to prevent getting sunburns,” says Heins.

UDOH researchers showed that the 2003 “Don’t Take the Sun Lightly” campaign was very successful in raising awareness over a short period of time. In May 2003, after less than four weeks on air, results from a Valley Research telephone survey showed that 76 percent of adults recalled seeing, hearing or reading skin cancer ads – a 58 percent increase over a similar survey done in January 2003. Among those recalling ads, 78 percent could “play back” the main message and other specific ad content. Awareness of skin cancer risk factors rose 11 percent.

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In that same survey, 28 percent of those recalling advertising said they changed their behavior as a result of information in the ads. The research showed there was an increased awareness about skin cancer in general and its risk factors. In January 2003, 22 percent of respondents identified skin cancer as one of the most commonly occurring types of cancer. This percentage increased to 33 percent in May.

Another report released in July of 2004 revealed that the continuing campaign was still working. Despite a much smaller campaign budget than the previous year, more than 68 percent of respondents said they had seen, heard or read skin cancer prevention commercials or advertisements. Almost 40 percent of respondents reported “always” applying sunscreen to their children before going outdoors. More than 25 percent reported said behavior as a result of seeing sunscreen messaging. The majority of those reporting no behavior change said that they “already do what is recommended.”

Educating Utahns with lower income and education levels continues to be the challenge. “This group doesn’t cover up or use sunscreen as often as other groups do,” said Heins. UCAN will do more research to find out the reasons for this and will continue to push for increased skin cancer awareness in the winter of 2005.

UCAN is comprised of 80 community partners including hospitals, universities, the UDOH, American Cancer Society and Huntsman Cancer Institute. UCAN is funded by grants from the CDC.

To review the report in CDC’s *Preventing Chronic Disease* go to:

www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2004/oct/04_0023.htm. For more information about UCAN, go to: www.ucan.cc.

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